

Isaiah 6:1-8  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
St. Luke 5:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

We've heard a couple of stories this morning about famous people just starting out in the work they are famous for. Isaiah has been known as a great hero of the faith for over two thousand years and Saint Peter's name cannot be spoken without also thinking of the rock on which the Church is built. In this morning's lesson we heard about Isaiah's first call from God to do his work - and the great hero of the faith had one response: "Send somebody else." Peter was a little more direct. He was standing face to face with Jesus Christ and he said, "Go away." Both men were scared to death. They realized they were in the presence of God and they both felt very unworthy to be in the presence of God. Isaiah said, "Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips!" Peter said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Isaiah was not worthy to do God's work. Peter was not worthy to do God's work. Is *anyone* worthy to do God's work? We are sinful people, everyone of us. If we judge our "worthiness to serve God" based on whether or not we are sinful...we will answer every call to service with a heartfelt "Woe is me." and we, too, will tell Jesus to "Go away".

God is perfect and he is all-powerful. We are sinful. There is no way we are going to make ourselves righteous and ready to serve him.

Yet, he demands our service. He wants us. We know we are too sinful. God knows we are too sinful even better than we know it. We are not worthy.

Isaiah stood before God almighty, too sinful to be of any use. God gave him a sign to show him that he, God, had made Isaiah ready to do God's work. Simon Peter stood before Jesus, too sinful even to be in Jesus' presence. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching people." Do not be afraid; do my work.

Yes, you are sinful. You may think of yourself as one of the most sinful people on earth. Don't let that *bother* you. On the other hand, you may think of yourself as hardly sinful at all and certainly better than most. Don't let that *comfort* you. God doesn't make those distinctions.

When we compare our sinfulness to other people to see whom we are more sinful than or less sinful than...we are measuring what we do. Our relationship with God is determined by what he does.

All God cares about is the fact that you are sinful - and you are. So, he did something about it. He came as Jesus Christ and said, "Do not be afraid."

Those are Jesus' words, when he finds you surrounded by your every day tasks. When you are at your work and living your life, without really thinking about it. And you hear a different (and, really, unrealistic) call. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."

Peter stands on his boat - the same boat he has stood on day in and day out and made his living (without much thought) for a long time. The sun beats down on him...and, even in those familiar surroundings, he's so scared he doesn't even pay attention to enough fish flopping all around his feet to fill his boat twice over. He's scared because he realizes he is in the presence of God...and he remembers that he is sinful. He wants to be out of the presence of God - because God is so different.

Christ says, "Do not be afraid."

Peter threw down his net – his familiar net – the net you'd think he would need to keep from being afraid – and he followed Jesus for the rest of his life.

This does not mean that Peter became perfect. That is *not* why he became a great disciple. After he began his discipleship, Peter committed some of the best known sins in human history. He cut off a slave's ear in the Garden of Gethsemane; he denied Christ three times, Paul had to chew him out in front of the whole church because he became a hypocrite with the Gentiles. No, Peter did not become perfect. He became forgiven - and he is the foundation of our church.

Jesus spoke of forgiveness and courage. Jesus told Peter he had a direction in life and he would be travelling with him. You see what Christ's power to forgive can do. It can do it for us, too. You are sinful, but you are worthy to serve God. God has made you worthy.

Someday, sooner or later, this life is going to end for every one of us. Like Peter, we are going to realize that we are coming into the presence of God almighty to be judged. There is no way we can stand up to that judgement. We haven't lived perfect lives and nothing else will do. We are going to be standing face to face with Christ and, like Peter did on his boat, it is going to come into our minds that we haven't made the grade. Listen again to the words of no less than Jesus Christ: "Do not be afraid."

That's what all the commotion is about. That's why this fellow Jesus Christ has set the world on its ear for two thousand years and it hasn't shown any signs of getting out from under his influence. We are not afraid of judgement. "The presence of Jesus" is where we want to be. He gives courage to change things. He comes into the lives of his followers and they make a difference.

God has come into our lives and made us part of all creation. "Follow me...make a difference in the world." Jesus says, "You are sinful, but that won't stop my plans for you."

We will be judged, but no one will ever go to hell because he is sinful – but not being ready to believe his sin is forgiven...? Maybe that is hell. Staying on the boat - afraid. Unable

to accept the strengthening grace of God so we can live the lives God created. Jesus himself comes into our lives - where we live - everyday. (Like Peter on his very familiar fishing boat.) And Jesus says, "Follow me; I will live with you. Your life will be worth more than you could ever achieve on your own. You will be part of wonderful things." ... And so often people are unwilling to follow the command. Frozen by the fear of judgement. Closing off any possibilities.

We usually think of being separated from God as strange and different; unimaginable. But maybe separation from God is condemnation to an eternity of being exactly the same. No possibility of change. No hope of being more or better. Just staying on the boat.

Like Peter, we look up and see Jesus and he calls us to be a part of eternity. If we think about how we are, we will stay on the boat. If we think about how we can be, we will follow Jesus.

Heaven is a life with God - and it starts as soon as we follow Jesus. When we are willing to go into the unknown, as long as we are going there with Christ.

Your sins are great? That may be. They may be monstrous. No matter how great your sins, Jesus is a greater savior. He will forgive them. Trust him; he is God.

Are you worthy to do God's work? I should say so. You are no less than a son or daughter of God himself. You are ready to do his work. Peter was not a great hero of the faith because he avoided sinning. Peter got all of those wonderful things done because he heard a word of forgiveness and followed the call of Christ.

There was no security in that arrangement. There never has been. Please note Jesus did not say, "Follow me, it's perfectly safe." He said, "Don't be afraid of the danger." Jesus calls us to courage, and courage is not the same thing as security.

There is no security. Peter left his boat and had no idea where he was going. But he was not afraid. He had a life and he had the serenity of knowing how he would use it. His life would be lived for God.

Our lives are that valuable. Too valuable for anything we do to hide them from God. Too valuable for our sins to keep God from finding us.

Jesus finds you at your daily tasks and he says, "Do not be afraid; follow me."